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**Wildlife
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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MARYLAND

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Maryland

Every day, Maryland residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Maryland Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS has teamed up with the Wildlife and Heritage Division of Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide professional guidance to citizens who have concerns and problems with wildlife. As the operators for the DNR's toll-free Nuisance Wildlife Information Line, WS provides technical assistance to thousands of callers on a one-to-one basis. WS has worked with several Maryland airports to help protect human safety and aircraft from dangerous wildlife/aircraft collisions. WS also works with Andrews Air Force Base, the home of the 89th Airlift Wing and Air Force One, as well as Martin State Airport, the home of the Maryland Air National Guard, to reduce wildlife hazards.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also



provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$500 million annually. More importantly, these strikes place the safety of passengers and flight crews at risk. Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI), the nation's second fastest growing airport, reported 320 wildlife/aircraft strikes from 1990 to 2000. WS has a full-time wildlife biologist stationed at BWI assisting with projects and research aimed at minimizing wildlife hazards. This presence at BWI has helped to increase awareness of wildlife hazards and reduce the threat of wildlife collisions with commercial aircraft.

Since 1999, WS has provided technical assistance to five Maryland airports and an air-base, either through initial consultation visits or through the development of wildlife hazard assessments. WS also provides training to airport personnel to help lower the risk of wildlife/aircraft collisions. Currently, WS is helping the Maryland Aviation Administration develop comprehensive wildlife hazard management plans for 2 airports.

In addition to hands-on technical assistance, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH Field Station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and to reduce risks

Major Assistance Activities:

- Providing technical assistance and educating the public about wildlife, particularly in urban areas
- Reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Protecting natural resources and reducing nutria damage to the Chesapeake Bay
- Managing problems caused by Canada geese
- Protecting public health through monitoring of West Nile virus

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Maryland:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies and bovine tuberculosis
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

Protecting Property and Natural Resources—Most birds are protected by an international treaty known as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). This very important legislation is responsible for the conservation and the continuing population growth of many bird species. However, the MBTA protects some bird species such as Canada geese and vultures that often cause great economic and ecological damages. FWS recognizes WS expertise when it comes to the prevention and control of damage caused by migratory birds.

With nearly 400,000 Canada geese migrating through Maryland each year, and as many as 93,000 Canada geese that call Maryland home year-round, many of Maryland's farmers and waterfront property owners experience problems with these birds. Since 1997, WS has provided technical assistance for more than three hundred geese-related problems each year and more than one hundred annual requests for vulture-related assistance.

In FY 2002, WS initiated a new partnership with FWS and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to protect wetlands along the Chesapeake Bay from damage caused by nutria; an invasive species that has proliferated along the Chesapeake, damaging both wetland and agricultural environments. The abundance of this large rodent, couple the rising sea levels, is resulting in the large-scale conversion of emergent marsh to open water. The goal of WS' management program is to test various nutria removal strategies and to determine if nutria can be eradicated from the bay. As part of this effort, WS is also testing associated marsh restoration strategies.

Protecting Public Health and Safety—In 2001 WS joined the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health in their efforts to control raccoon rabies through the use of oral vaccines. With assistance from WS, the rabies program was able to expand its efforts to two peninsulas and one island in the Annapolis area. More than 80,000 oral rabies vaccination baits were dropped in September from helicopters, vehicles, and by hand to ensure the vaccine was distributed throughout the targeted areas. When raccoons ingest the oral bait, they become vaccinated against the deadly disease. In addition to

protecting Maryland residents, pets, livestock, and wildlife, this effort is part of a larger campaign to create a rabies-free barrier along the East coast that will stop the westward spread of the disease.

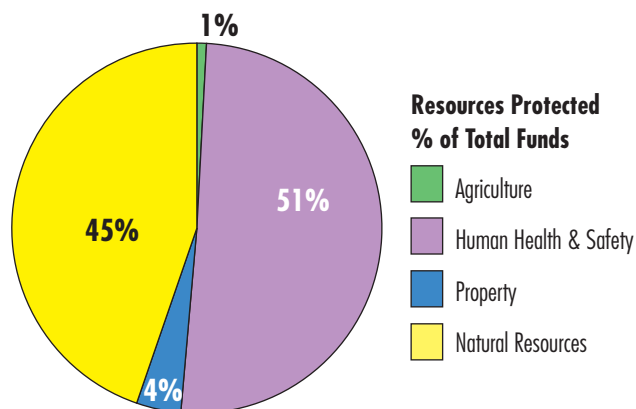
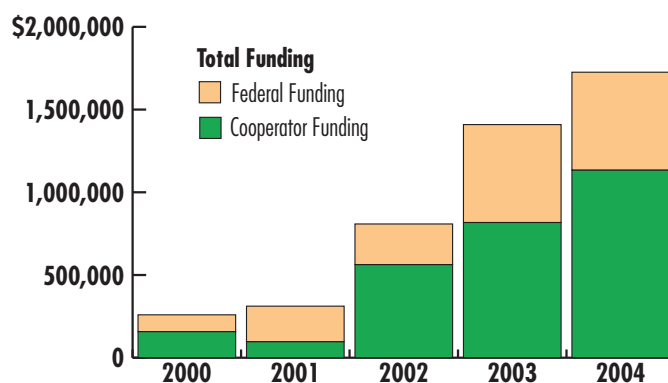
Looking to the Future

The growth in air travel coupled with the growth in the deer and bird populations has created a greater need for wildlife management at airports to reduce threats posed by wildlife.

Another public safety issue facing Maryland is the growing need to protect people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases. Rabies and West Nile virus are two major health concerns on the East coast. While Maryland WS is now active in rabies control efforts, the program could provide greater West Nile virus assistance to Federal, State, and local public health officials if program capabilities become expanded.

Maryland Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



Major Cooperators:

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Anne Arundel County Department of Health
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Andrews Air Forces Base
- Transportation Companies
- Maryland Aviation Administration
- Baltimore/Washington International Airport
- Martin State Airport
- NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center